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# Killers and Jokers

## The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence

by Victor Marchetti  
and John D. Marks.  
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Richard J. Barnet

In drafting impeachment articles the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives charged Nixon with "misuse of the CIA." The more fundamental question was outside the scope of their inquiry: What is the proper use of the CIA?

In the national security world Watergate has become a code word for official dismay that the wrong people were supplied with ill-fitting wigs and burglar tools at the wrong place and time. Nixon's defenders on the committee argued that if the president had reason to think that the CIA was involved in "proper" covert operations that would be jeopardized by a vigorous FBI investigation he was indeed obliged to mislead the chief investigating arm of the federal government. The president's accusers believed that he committed an impeachable offense by allowing members of the intelligence underworld like Hunt and Liddy to go after the wrong targets.

"National security" is the holy oil that converts felonious acts into patriotic exploits. It has been sprinkled liberally to justify break-ins at foreign embassies, but it is, fortunately, not yet available to bless burglaries on Beverly Hills psychiatrists. In the practice of covert intelligence the working tools are burglary, assassination, extortion, blackmail, and lying. It is hardly surprising that agents like E. Howard Hunt labor under some moral confusion. The following exchange between Hunt and Assistant US Attorney Earl Silbert took place before a federal grand jury in April, 1973.

*Silbert:* Now while you worked at the White House, were you ever a participant or did you ever have knowledge of any other so-called "bag job" or entry operations?

*Hunt:* No, sir.

*Silbert:* Were you aware of or did you participate in any other what might commonly be referred to as illegal activities?

*Hunt:* Illegal?

*Silbert:* Yes, sir.

*Hunt:* I have no recollection of any, no, sir.

*Silbert:* What about clandestine activities?

*Hunt:* Yes, sir.

*Silbert:* All right. What about that?

*Hunt:* I'm not quibbling, but there's quite a difference between something that's illegal and something that's clandestine.

*Silbert:* Well, in your terminology, would the entry into Mr. Fielding's [Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist] office have been clandestine, illegal, neither, or both?

*Hunt:* I would simply call it an entry operation conducted under the auspices of competent authority.

Hunt's responses illustrate what Victor Marchetti and John Marks call the "clandestine mentality," the state of mind which sustains the entire covert intelligence effort. Richard Bissell, former head of clandestine operations, once put it that CIA men "feel a higher loyalty and... they are acting in obedience to that higher loyalty." That higher loyalty is a definition of "national security" developed and communicated in secret by higher-ranking bureaucrats hermetically sealed from public scrutiny. "The nation must to a degree take it on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to her service," CIA Director Richard Helms declared in 1971. There is indeed a code of honor operating in the intelligence underworld, which is made up of people who surpass most of us in dedication to a higher cause. The question still obscured in the Watergate debate is this: What is that higher cause for which we must stand accepted norms of civilized conduct on their head?

Marchetti and Marks barely suggest an answer to that question in their heavily censored book *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*. The book mainly describes the life they observed when Marchetti was an assistant to the deputy director of the CIA and Marks worked for the director of intelligence in the State Department. They make no full analysis of the effects of the intelligence underworld on domestic politics and foreign policy. That book

remains to be written. But when it is, the efforts of Marchetti and Marks to collect specific data on the structure, finances, and operations of the CIA will be an indispensable source. For the increasing numbers of concerned citizens who vaguely feel they are being conned by government this book will be clarifying and infuriating. It destroys the CIA official cover story that it has replaced its spies, adventurers, and assassins with rows of Princeton graduates reading foreign newspapers. The following passage, which the CIA tried unsuccessfully to excise, makes it clear how important "dirty tricks" still are:

At present the agency uses about two-thirds of its funds and its manpower for covert operations and their support—proportions that have been held relatively constant for more than ten years. Thus, out of the agency's career work force of roughly 16,500 people and yearly budget of about \$750 million 11,000 personnel and roughly \$550 million are earmarked for the Clandestine Services and those activities of the Directorate of Management and Services (formerly the Directorate of Support), such as communications, logistics, and training, which contribute to covert activities. Only about 20 percent of the CIA's career employees (spending less than 10 percent of the budget) work on intelligence analysis and information processing.

Nothing in the career of the agency's new director, William Colby, suggests that covert operations will now become less important. Colby was an alumnus of OSS parachute operations in France and Norway, director of the 30,000-man Meo Armée Clandestine in Laos, designer of the agency's "Counter Terror" program in Vietnam (described by a former US Foreign Service adviser to South Vietnamese internal security programs as the use of "Viet